

Report

Lake Mead National Recreation Area

■ 1.0 Site Description



Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NRA) is located in southern Nevada and north-western Arizona, less than a one-hour drive from Las Vegas and within a six-hour drive from Los Angeles and Phoenix (see Figure 1). The Lake Mead NRA contains 1.5 million acres of federal and non-federal land and encompasses two reservoirs formed by the Colorado River: Lake Mead and Lake Mohave. Lake Mead is formed by the Hoover Dam and is 110-miles long. Lake Mohave is 67 miles long and formed by the Davis Dam.

A Visitor Center serving the Lake Mead NRA is located off U.S. Highway 93 four miles northeast of Boulder City, Nevada. There are nine major developments around the two lakes, six on Lake Mead and three on Lake Mohave.

- **Katherine Landing** – Large and popular resort area located on the southeast end of Lake Mohave near Davis Dam and Bullhead City, Arizona. Primary facilities include marina with launch ramp and boat shop, two motels and restaurant, swim beach, picnic shelters, amphitheater, campground, two trailer villages, store, gas station, ranger station, and comfort station.
- **Cottonwood Cove** – Popular resort to waterskiers and boaters during the summer months and fisherman during the fall, winter, and spring. Located on the west side of Lake Mohave near the Town of Searchlight, California. Primary facilities include motel and restaurant/store, marina with launch ramp and fish cleaning station, swim beach, picnic shelters, amphitheater, two campgrounds, trailer village, gas station, ranger station, and comfort station.

Figure 1. Vicinity Map



- **Willow Beach** – A fishing resort located on the northwest portion of Lake Mohave and containing small concession operations. Primary facilities include marina, motel, trailer village, and ranger station.
- **Boulder Beach** – Located on the southeast shore of Lake Mead near Boulder City and Hoover Dam, this is the largest and most heavily visited development area. Primary areas of Boulder Beach include Hemenway Harbor, Central Core, and Lake Mead Marina. Hemenway Harbor facilities include campground and beach areas. Central Core facilities include swim beach, picnic area, amphitheater, campground, motel, and ranger station. Lake Mead Marina facilities include marina with dry boat storage and boat launch, and store/restaurant.
- **Las Vegas Wash** – Located on the eastern shore of Lake Mead near Henderson, Nevada, this development area is the closest to Las Vegas and attracts a large number of day-use visitors. Primary facilities include marina with boat launch and dry boat storage, store/restaurant, campground, picnic area, and ranger station.

- **Callville Bay** – Located on the northern shore of the eastern portion of Lake Mead, this area is also close to Las Vegas and attracts a large number of day-use visitors. Primary facilities include the Lake Mead Yacht Club and Marina, store/restaurant and marina, trailer village, campground, picnic area, ranger station, and comfort station.
- **Echo Bay** – This resort area is located in the north central portion of Lake Mead, and is not as heavily used because of the area's distance from Las Vegas and southern California. Primary facilities include houseboat rental, marina with launch ramp, dry boat storage and fish cleaner, motel/restaurant, campground, trailer village, and ranger station.
- **Overton Beach** – Located in the northern portion of Lake Mead, this area also has less visitation due to its distance from Las Vegas and southern California. Primary facilities include launch ramp, swim beach, trailer village, camping area, ranger, station, and comfort station.
- **Temple Bar** – The last refueling and concession area for eastbound boaters traveling on Lake Mead, this area is the most remote of the nine developed areas. Primary facilities include marina with launch ramp, dry boat storage and fish cleaner, store/restaurant, gas station, motel, trailer village, camp sites, ranger station, and air strip.

The Lake Mead NRA is open year round, 24 hours, seven days per week. There is no admission fee to enter the park area. In 1998, the average number of annual visitors totaled over 9.0 million. Approximately 1.2 million persons per month visited the Lake Mead NRA during the peak visitation months of June and July. Peak visitation days occur during summer weekends, especially holiday weekends, where approximately 50,000 persons visit the Lake Mead NRA daily. The majority of the visitors to Lake Mead NRA are boaters who stay an average of one to days per visit. Day-trippers from Las Vegas and Laughlin, Nevada comprise a large portion of the visitors. The numbers of these visitors are increasing due to the tremendous growth occurring in the Las Vegas and Laughlin areas.

■ 2.0 Existing ATS

There is no existing Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) on site. Las Vegas tour operators transport passengers from Las Vegas to Lake Mead NRA to ride the Desert Princess. The Desert Princess is a paddlewheel boat that provides tours on Lake Mead to Hoover Dam. In addition, many tour bus operators destined to Las Vegas from other attractions drive along Lake Mead, but the destination of these passengers is not the Lake Mead NRA.

■ 3.0 ATS Needs

According to the Assistant Park Superintendent, lack of sufficient parking and traffic congestion on Northshore Road are major transportation-related problems at Lake Mead NRA. On summer weekends, people often must park up to two miles away from boat launch areas. The terrain around the Lake affords limited opportunities to provide more parking. Portions of Northshore Road, connecting Las Vegas Wash, Callville Bay, and Echo Bay are only nine-feet wide without any shoulders. Improvements to widen the road and add paved shoulders will be completed in 2001. The Lake Mead Management Plan is currently being prepared to determine the Lake's carrying capacity and extent of improvements to parking that should be accomplished without leading to overuse of the lake and degradation of the visitor experience.

ATS are generally not feasible for boaters, but would be feasible to serve day-use visitors. Potential additional ATS concepts include:

- Construct satellite-parking areas away from the waterfront where the terrain is more compatible and provide shuttle service to the waterfront facilities.
- Reroute bus service to provide access to recreational areas of Lake Mead NRA. Clark County Citizen Area Transit bus service between Las Vegas, Henderson, and Boulder, Nevada could be rerouted along Shore Drive to provide alternative transit opportunities to the Lake Mead NRA. Another option is to provide bus service between Laughlin, Nevada and Bullhead City, Arizona to Katherine Landing on Lake Mead NRA. Increased transit opportunities to access Lake Mead NRA reduce parking requirements on site.

■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

Any ATS concept that facilitates increased usage of Lake Mead NRA and its facilities should be evaluated to ensure the carrying capacity of the Lake could accommodate the increased usage. Additional services proposed would have the following benefits:

- Shuttle services from satellite parking areas would enable the provision of parking where the terrain was more suitable and would retain the waterfront for recreation-related activities; and
- Expanded bus service would provide additional access opportunities to Lake Mead NRA that would not require additional parking areas.

■ 5.0 Bibliography

National Park Service. *Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volume I – General Management Plan and Alternatives*, July 1986.

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■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

William K. Dickinson, Assistant Superintendent, Lake Mead National Recreation Area